

Sūrah 107

Al-Mā'ūn

(Articles of Common Necessity)

(Makkan Period)

Title

The last word of the concluding verse, *al-mā'ūn* (articles of common necessity) came to be regarded as this *Sūrah*'s title.

Period of Revelation

Ibn Marduwayh quotes the opinion of Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn al-Zubayr that it is a Makkan *Sūrah*. The same view is shared by 'Atā' and Jābir. However, in his *Bahr al-Muhiṭ*, Abū Ḥayyān cites the opinion of Ibn 'Abbās, Qatādah and Dāḥhāk that it is Madīnan. In our opinion, it contains a piece of internal evidence about its Madīnan origin – its warning against those who neglect Prayer and who make a show of their Prayer. Such hypocrites were only to be found in Madīnah. For, as Islam gained strength, these same people felt compelled to parade themselves as Muslims in order to reap benefits. Driven by their hypocrisy, they went to the mosque, joined congregational Prayer and offered Prayer as a show so that they could be taken as Muslims. In Makkah such conditions did

not obtain. The Muslims did not dare offer congregational Prayer there. They prayed privately and secretly as doing so publicly could bring harm to them. The hypocrites in Makkah were not the ones who made a show of their Prayer. Rather, they were of the type who hesitated to accept Islam, notwithstanding their recognition of the Prophet (peace be upon him) as the true Messenger of Allah, because of the dangers attendant upon embracing Islam. They could lose their position and status. Furthermore, they were unwilling to undergo the persecution inflicted upon Muslims there. Verses 10-11 of *al-'Ankabūt* portray this condition of Makkan hypocrites. (See *Towards Understanding the Qur'ān*, Vol. VIII, *al-'Ankabūt*, nn. 13-16, pp. 13-16.)

Subject Matter and Theme

The *Sūrah* explains how rejection of the doctrine of the Hereafter corrupts man's morals and manners. Verses 2 and 3 speak of the unbelievers who openly rejected the Hereafter. Verses 4-7 relate the despicable conduct of hypocrites who despite their claim to be Muslim have no regard for divine recompense. The misconduct of both these groups underscores the truth that without belief in the Hereafter, man cannot develop good morals and manners.